



Visible Smoke Test Questions and Answers

1. When will the Visible Smoke Test be required as part of the Smog Check inspection?

The new test is scheduled for implementation in March, 2008.

2. What model years and vehicle types will be subject to the test?

All model years and vehicle types subject to a Smog Check inspection must have the Visible Smoke Test performed.

3. Will the test be performed statewide?

Yes.

4. Why is a test for Visible Smoke being added to Smog Check?

This test is being added to comply with the requirements of Assembly Bill 1870 (Chapter 761, 2006). This law mandates that a Visible Smoke Test be performed on a vehicle's tailpipe and PCV System.

5. What is the purpose of the Visible Smoke Test?

The Visible Smoke Test will identify vehicles in need of repair and reduce Particulate Matter (PM). PM is very small liquid and solid particles in the air. PM is not measured by California's existing Smog Check test. It is often associated with diesel exhaust, but it is also produced by gasoline powered vehicles. These fine particles can collect in the respiratory system and are linked to a number of health problems.

6. Will there be any benefit to my vehicle?

Visible smoke emissions from gasoline powered vehicles are typically the result of incomplete fuel combustion or the poor mechanical condition of the engine or transmission component in which lubricating oil is being burned. Incomplete fuel combustion produces black or gray smoke. Burning lubricating oil from the engine or transmission produces blue or bluish-white smoke. Oil in the exhaust causes catalyst poisoning, causing rapid deterioration of the vehicle's catalytic converter. For vehicles equipped with computer controls, oil will also cause rapid deterioration of the vehicle's oxygen sensor. The oxygen sensor is an essential emission control component that provides information to the vehicle's computer, allowing it to control fuel mixtures and tailpipe emissions.

7. How much smoke will cause a vehicle to fail its Smog Check?

Any visible smoke emitted from the tailpipe or Positive Crankcase Ventilation (PCV) System would cause a failure of the Visible Smoke Test. However, steam from condensation will not lead to an inspection failure. Smoke that is observed emitting from any area of a vehicle other than the vehicle's tailpipe or PCV System, regardless of the cause, will not constitute a failure of the Visible Smoke Test.



Visible Smoke Test

8. How much time will the Visible Smoke Test add to the inspection time?

The regulation requires a minimum of 10 seconds be dedicated to check whether smoke is emitting from the tailpipe and another 10 seconds to check if smoke is emitting from the PCV System.

9. What is the technician supposed to do?

The test requires the technician to look for visible smoke coming from the tailpipe after the end of the tailpipe emissions test. The technician will do this with the engine idling and look for at least 10 seconds. The technician will also look for visible smoke coming from the crankcase (PCV System) for 10 seconds during the liquid leak test while the engine is at idle.

10. Will any special equipment be required?

No new equipment will be required to perform the test.

11. How many vehicles are expected to fail the Visible Smoke test?

A joint Bureau of Automotive Repair (BAR) (September 2005) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) report estimates that about 200,000 vehicles emit smoke.

12. Will vehicles failing for the Visible Smoke Test be eligible for waivers, repair assistance, or vehicle retirement?

If a vehicle fails the Visible Smoke Test, the owner may be eligible for up to \$500 in repair assistance. Consumers whose vehicles fail the Visible Smoke Test may also be eligible to receive \$1,000 for voluntarily retiring their vehicle through a state-approved dismantler. Under the new law, however, a waiver is only available to consumers with limited incomes. Consumers interested in any of these options can contact the Consumer Assistance Program at 866.272.9642, or check the BAR Web site at www.smogcheck.ca.gov.

13. What if a customer disputes a Visible Smoke Test failure?

Customers who wish to dispute their vehicle's smoke test results may schedule a verification test with a State Referee by calling 800.622.7733.